

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES (ADVS)
ADVISORY COMMISSION
HELD THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2005

A public meeting of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) Advisory Commission was called to order on February 10, 2005 at 10:05 a.m. at the Arizona State Veteran Home, 4141 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona.

Advisory Commission Members

Present:

Webb Ellis, Chairperson
Joan Sisco, Vice Chairperson
Tom Dingwall
Linda Fulkerson
Robert Boyd
Mary Ellen Piotrowski

ADVS Staff

Present:

Patrick F. Chorpensing, Director, ADVS
Luella Emmons, Asst. Deputy Director, ADVS
Susan Aguinaldo, Asst. Administrator, ASVH
Mike Klier, Asst. Deputy Director, ADVS
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner

Commissioners Not in Attendance:

Phillip Quochytewa
Larry Brown
Robert Sigholtz

Special Guests:

Lee Borgen, VBC, Lake Havasu City
Robert Bohach, 1st Marine Division
Association

Webb Ellis, Advisory Commission Chairperson determined that a quorum was present. The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Patrick F. Chorpensing, ADVS Director informed the Advisory Commission that Doris Earley is on sick leave until further notice. Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner, will serve as the secretary to the ADVS Advisory Commission. Chairman Ellis offered his wishes for a speedy recovery to Doris Earley and extended his appreciation to her for many years of service to the ADVS Advisory Commission.

Chairman Ellis reviewed the January 13, 2005 minutes of the Advisory Commission meeting. There was a single point of clarification noted for the minutes. The suggestion was made to split the State along Congressional Districts, but this proved to be too confusing to be practical. The minutes were approved with this correction.

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) Reports:

Susan Aguinaldo, Assistant Administrator, Arizona State Veteran Home (ASVH): The census is at 184, with a daily average of 189 during the month of January. The Arizona Department of Health Services is partnering with the Home to train surveyors. While the new surveyors were in the facility last week, there were no deficiencies noted by the team.

Luella Emmons, Assistant Deputy Director: There are currently 17, 101 clients being served by the Veterans Service Division currently. From July 1, 2004 until the end of January 2005, the VA awards resulting from claims filed totaled \$51,450,000.

Mike Klier, Assistant Deputy Director: The proposed veterans' license plate is being laminated now and will be presented for final approval very soon. The County Health Department gave the Home an award for being deficiency free. There are plans to update the conference room, patio areas, and security systems of the ASVH. A model resident room is being completed this week, which can be shown to applicants, guests, and veterans service organizations.

The President's budget/GAO (General Accounting Office) budget was submitted to Congress this week. The following issues have been raised by veterans service organizations:

- Prescription co-payments increase from \$7 to \$15
- Veterans in certain categories who participate in the VA health system will pay \$250 per year
- Additional claim processing staff will be slightly less than the number of staff deleted during the last budget. The current backlog is estimated to be 480,000 unprocessed claims.
- Veterans' nursing home funds are being cut and will serve 28,000 fewer residents.
- State grants to build state veteran homes went from \$118 million last year to \$12 million in the current budget

Mr. Chorpenning distributed 4 documents for review by the Commission: the VA budget; the press release from the Office of Public Affairs; a news release from The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars; and a position statement from the VFW regarding the VA budget. Commissioner Dingwall offered to forward information that he had received from other veterans service organizations to both the Chairman and the Director within the next 24 hours.

Chairman Ellis requested that United Arizona Veterans (UAV) be notified of the VA budget issue to involve the veterans service organizations belonging to that organization. This is a federal issue, which is normally outside the scope of the Advisory Commission's responsibilities. Because Arizona veterans were directly affected by the proposed VA budget, a letter signed by each of the Commissioners might be in order. The Commissioners unanimously supported the concept. Chairman Ellis will work with the Commissions to draft a letter regarding the VA budget within the next two weeks.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society has been in Phoenix this week in preparation of the September convention. Mr. Chorpenning suggested that the convention committee send a representative to UAV to discuss opportunities for veterans service organizations to be become involved in the convention to be held at the Hilton at Pointe Tapatio Cliffs in Phoenix.

The strategic plan was distributed to the Commissioners, reflecting minor changes that were suggested during the January meeting. "Regions and the Commissioner Responsibilities" was distributed for review and comment. Arizona is broken into four regions so that each Commissioner can focus on issues affecting veterans in their assigned region. The Commissioners volunteered to serve on the regions as outlined below:

- Region 1 Commissioners Sisco and Sigholtz
- Region 2 Commissioners Quochytewa and Boyd
- Region 3 Commissioners Dingwall and Piotrowski
- Region 4 Commissioners Fulkerson and Brown

Region 1 = Yavapai, Pinal and Maricopa (excluding the Phoenix metropolitan area)

Region 2 = Coconino, Navajo, Apache, and Gila

Region 3 = Pima (excluding the Tucson metropolitan area), Santa Cruz, Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee

Region 4 = Mohave, La Paz, and Yuma

In order to maximize their representation, Military service organizations need to be briefed as to how the Region Committees will work. At the April meeting, the Commissioners will discuss how the military service organizations can become involved in Region Committees and Military Veterans First, LTD. will make a presentation. Views of participating military service organizations will be considered as Commission recommendations are formulated.

Commissioner Fulkerson discussed a scheduling problem at the VA hospitals whereby patients are required to call exactly one month in advance for appointments. She added specific instances where patients received poor customer service over the phone. Mr. Chorpenning suggested that the VA hospital directors from Tucson, Phoenix, Prescott be invited to the April Commissioners meeting, which met with full support of the Commission.

Commissioner Dingwall was complimentary of the Southern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Sierra Vista. In the event the Iraq war or subsequent actions require an emergency burial plan, the cemetery has a plan to accommodate mass burials.

Merchant Mariners do not have veteran status unless they served during WWII. Mr. Chorpenning advised the Commission to be sensitive to the frustrations of the Merchant Mariners, although this is a federal issue and clearly outside the scope of the Commission's responsibility.

Mr. Chorpenning suggested the Commissioners attend a weekend retreat in order to flesh out action plans to implement its strategic plan. Chairman Ellis suggested that a retreat be scheduled after July 1, 2005, so that any new commissioners are involved. There are three terms which expire at that time with the potential of three new Commissioners being appointed by the Governor.

The next scheduled Advisory Commission meeting is Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. at the Arizona State Veteran Home, 4141 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona.

Commissioner Ellis called for adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Thru: _____ Date: _____
Patrick F. Chorpensing, Director

Accepted by: _____ Date: _____
Webb Ellis, Chairperson

Recorder/Transcriber: _____ Date: _____
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner